

MARBLEHEAD REPORTER

CYCLE SENSE: Outstanding and standing out

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Congratulations and a big shout out to the city of Beverly and the Beverly Bike Committee (BBC) for recently being designated a Bronze-Level Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists. It is an outstanding achievement, and being recognized on their first application is notable. Only 38 towns or cities were recognized this spring. Many things contribute to safe bicycling in a community, but few have greater impact than a dedicated community advocacy group in partnership with the local government. The Bicycle Friendly Community is a nationwide program; Beverly is now 1 of only 482 communities around the country with this distinction. Massachusetts has 14 Bicycle Friendly Communities, and Beverly is the first on the North Shore.

It is no secret that bicycle sales and ridership have skyrocketed during the past four months. Essential workers and others are using bicycles for commuting. More of us are cycling to stay physically and mentally healthy. And families appreciate bicycling as a safe and physical outdoor activity. All of these things place added stress on a community's "bicycle capacity," balancing the number of riders and their level of safety knowledge, riding skills and confidence with facilities and infrastructure. The Bicycle Friendly Community program consists of a range of elements to help build this capacity. It includes community efforts to educate children and adults on how to bike, planning and building cycling infrastructure (like bike lanes and sharrows), evaluating success towards getting more people on bikes and encouraging road safety — all through the lens of equity. Beverly's effort to improve biking for all who live or work in the city comes at a very good time.

Stand out. The importance of doing simple yet impactful things to improve your own safety on a bicycle is a theme in these articles. Another topic is be conspicuous on the road. First, ride where people can see you and expect to see you. Ride on the right side of the road, going with traffic. Avoid bicycling on sidewalks, as motorists and pedestrians do not expect you to be there (and it is generally illegal in MA). Dress to be seen. Special cycling gear is not

needed; everyday clothes work just fine. Wearing bright or light colors and any reflective clothing will help the cyclist be more visible. Avoid dark colors, especially toward dawn or dusk. All bicycles come equipped with a number of reflectors increasing visibility from all directions. A growing trend is using daytime running lights, similar to their use on automobiles. Studies show a flashing taillight is 2.4 times more noticeable than no light at all, and occurrence of crashes involving bicycles is reduced by one-third when daytime running lights are used. For the safety conscious cyclist, daytime lights are very effective. Just a reminder: A front white light and rear red reflector or light are required by law within a half-hour of sunrise and sunset.

A final thought: In addition to being seen by others, the responsible cyclist makes every effort to use her senses to be aware of other vehicles and pedestrians around her. Scanning the road to be aware of the broader traffic scenario is an important skill. Making eye contact with drivers of other vehicles, particularly at intersections, is very effective. Listening for traffic is even more important for the cyclist compared to the motorist. Use of any type of headphones or ear buds while bicycling is potentially dangerous and not recommended.

For a short video from the Bike League on what to wear, check out this link:
<https://youtu.be/1sosBW2PhZI>.

This is the fourth in a series of articles about bicycling and bicycle safety. The author is affiliated with Sustainable Marblehead (<http://sustainablemarblehead.org>), BIKE Marblehead, MassBike (<http://massbike.org>), and is a League of American Bicyclists (LAB) Certified Instructor (<http://bikeleague.org>). Source material from LAB appears in this article.